

HARTLEY PARISH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Hartley Parish Council wants to work closely with its residents to encourage them to be actively involved in the decisions that affect them and their community.

Our aim is to engage with our residents to enable the Council to secure better services and to create a more active and informed community.

The Parish Council will use the following strategies to ensure this:

1. The Parish Council will make information available on what decisions are being considered and advise residents on how they can contribute to the discussions / decision making process.

Methods used to ensure this, will be the website, 3 x Parish Council notice boards, leaflets, posters, consultations, Parish Council newsletter, word of mouth e.g Members Surgeries, easily understandable reports.

2. Hartley Parish Council will be proactive and willing to consider any reasonable opportunities that will assist in making information available and increasing contributions from residents, including those that are difficult to reach e.g. housebound.

All meetings of the Parish Council and its Committees are open to the public and the Chairman may, at his discretion and at a convenient time in the transaction of business, adjourn the meeting so as to allow any members of the public to address the meeting to make representations, ask questions or give evidence relating to the business to be transacted at that meeting.

Residents can access agendas for all Council/Committee meetings via the website or by calling in to the Parish Office. Dates and times of meetings are displayed on the Parish Council's 3 notice boards and on the website. The Council's information leaflets explain the procedure and offer advice on how to ask questions at meetings. Opportunities are also available for residents, if necessary, to make written reports or have a case presented on their behalf, to members.

3. The Parish Office will play a neutral role in order that residents can be fully involved and be confident that they are receiving unbiased information and support.

This neutral involvement allows more flexibility in the service and the personal element of the contact may encourage more involvement from the hard to reach members of the community. Whist the Parish Office has set opening times, if necessary, it will be opened outside of these hours to accommodate residents who are at work during normal opening hours.

4. The Parish Council will arrange for the production of a quarterly newsletter which will be distributed to all households in the Parish.

An Annual Report will be produced in May of each year, outlining the work undertaken by the Council and each Committee, during the year. The Annual Report will also include a summary of the Council's accounts for the year. The Annual Report will be delivered to each household by 30th June each year.

The newsletter and Annual Report will also be available to view on the website and copies are available to collect from Hartley Library.

In addition to the above, the Annual Report will be available at the Annual Parish Meeting held in May each year.

5. Details of how to contact the Parish Office will be displayed on the notice boards, website and in the quarterly newsletter.
6. The Parish Council will produce leaflets (available from the Parish Office, Hartley Library and website), that support engagement of the community e.g. How to Ask a Question at Council and Committee Meetings, What is a Parish Council? and Local Services and Useful Contacts. The leaflets will also be distributed to new residents via the local Estate Agents.
7. The Parish Council will continue to use any opportunities afforded to be present in the community e.g. invitations from local schools. Every opportunity to increase this public presence will be welcomed and considered.

The Clerk and individual Councillors play a role in identifying opportunities.

8. The Parish Council will continue the current position of using 4 different local venues to hold meetings, to enable residents to access meetings without the need to travel long distances.
9. The Hartley Village Design Statement (VDS), produced by the Parish Plan Steering Committee was formally adopted by the District Council in April 2008. A copy of the VDS is available to view in the Parish Office and also on the website. Production of a Parish Plan is also nearing completion.
10. The Parish Council will be receptive to requests from residents or local groups and will attempt to be flexible in order to ensure that their opinions are known to the Parish Council and, if necessary, to relevant authorities/organisations.

This may be achieved by including an item for discussion on an agenda or allowing a resident/local group to address the Council/Committee at meetings.

11. The Parish Council will continue to hold regular Members Surgeries in the Parish Office, which residents are encouraged to attend to ask any questions or discuss any issues that they may have.

Holding regular Surgeries enables the Members to find out what the community wants or expects from the Parish Council. Details of the times and dates of Members Surgeries are advertised on the website and notice boards and in the newsletter and other local publications.

12. The Parish Council will continue to seek residents' views on issues and proposed projects, via a number of options e.g. conducting online surveys,

producing 'special' newsletters, holding public meetings etc. and results will be made available.

When dealing with 'controversial' issues or with issues that affect a particular section of the community, consideration will be given to holding special meetings in a local venue.

13. The Parish Council will be open and accountable in its dealing with residents and will make information on its policies and procedures freely available.
14. The Parish Council will, where appropriate, ensure that residents and local groups are referred to the correct department/officer, District or County Councillor and that they are aware of the ways in which they can use the relevant systems to make their views known.
15. The Parish Council will review its Community Engagement Strategy on an annual basis to ensure its continuing relevance.